

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 OMB-01

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P R 060218Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3817

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 23296

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS BF TH

SUBJ: BANGLADESH MILITARY OFFICERS IN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 23272

1. FOL IS TEXT OF REUTERS INTERVIEW WITH LTC FAROOQ RAHMAN, ONE OF GROUP OF BANGLA DESH OFFICERS WHO FLED TO BANGKOK NOV 3-4, AS PUBLISHED IN BANGKOK WORLD NOV 5.

QTE: THREE BANGLADESH ARMY OFFICERS WHO LED THE COUP AGAINST SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN LAST AUGUST LEFT THE COUNTRY THIS WEEK ON ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT KHONDAKER MUSTAQUE AHMED FOLLOWING A "COUNTER-COUP" BY DISGRUNTLED COLONELS, ONE OF THE THREE SAID HERE TODAY.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SAYED FAROOK RAHMAN SAID THAT HE AND TWO OTHER LEADERS OF THE AUGUST COUP, IN WHICH MUJIB WAS KILLED, LEFT THEIR COUNTRY BECAUSE PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE AHMED DID NOT WANT ANY BLOODSHED.

THEY LEFT DACCA LATE ON MONDAY NIGHT AFTER A 21-HOUR CONFRONTATION WITH A GROUP OF SENIOR OFFICERS WHO HAD BEEN CLOSE TO MUJIB, THE "FATHER OF BANGLADESH" WHO LED HIS PEOPLE TO NATIONHOOD IN 1971, COL FAROOK SAID.

WITH 12 OTHER OFFICERS, TWO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS-- INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD-- SEVEN WOMEN UNCLASSIFIED

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AND FIVE CHILDREN, THEY ARRIVED IN BANGKOK EARLY YESTERDAY

IN A BANGLADESH BIMAN AIRLINES FOKKER AIRCRAFT ORDERED BY THE PRESIDENT AND ALLOWED TO LEAVE BY THE OPPOSING MILITARY FACTION.

COL. FAROOK IDENTIFIED THE OTHER LEADERS OF THE AUGUST COUP WHO WERE WITH HIM HERE AS LIEUTENANT-COLONEL K.A. RASHID AND LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SHARIFUL HUQUE, ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME "MAJOR DALIM.

COL. FAROOK SAID THEY HAD INFORMED THE UNITED STATES AND PAKISTAN EMBASSIES OF THEIR PRESENCE AND INTENDED APPLYING TO THEM FOR ASYLUM. THEY HAD BEEN GRANTED 15-DAY VISAS FOR THIS COUNTRY.

HE SAID THE COUNTER-COUP STARTED AT ABOUT 2A.M. ON MONDAY AND WAS LED BY BRIGADIER KHALID MUSHAREF, CHIEF OF THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF.

BANGLADESH RADIO SAID LAST NIGHT THAT BRIGADIER MUSHARAF HAD BEEN PROMOTED TO MAJOR-GENERAL WITH EFFECT FROM YESTERDAY AND APPOINTED ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF.

(HE REPLACED MAJOR-GENERAL SIAUR RAHMAN, WHO WAS ARRESTED DURING MONDAY'S ACTION, ALONG WITH AIR FORCE COMMANDER AIR VICE-MARSHAL G.M. TAWAB, COL FAROOK SAID.)

COL FAROOK ALSO NAMED OTHER OFFICERS WHO HE SAID WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR ROLES SINCE PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE AHMED TOOK POWER AND WANTED MORE POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

ASKED IF THE COUNTER-COUP MEANT A COMEBACK BY MEN CLOSE TO MUJIB, HE SAID, "POSSIBLY.... KHALID WAS CLOSE TO MUJIB. HE SAID OTHER OFFICERS IN THE COUNTER-COUP MOVEMENT ALSO HAD IMPORTANT POSITIONS UNDER THE SLAIN LEADER, BUT WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING TRANSFERRED TO LOW-GRADE POSTS.

ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT, HE SAID LAST AUGUST'S COUP AND SUBSEQUENT ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE AHMED OF PLANS FOR A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH HAD BEEN "A SLAP IN THE FACE FOR INDIA."

"THE INDIANS WERE VERY ACTIVE," HE ADDED.

COLONEL FAROOK SAID THAT BY ABOUT 5 P.M. ON MONDAY, THE MILITARY SITUATION AND NEGOTIATIONS WERE AT STALEMATE AND NOT A SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED.

THE PRESIDENT REFUSED TO ALLOW HIM AND OTHER LOYAL OFFICERS TO COUNTER-ATTACK AND TOLD THEM TO LEAVE THE UNCLASSIFIED

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COUNTRY.

HE TOLD THEM, " IF I CAN GET OUT LATER. I WILL COME...
"THEY CAN KILL ME, THEY CAN THROW ME OUT OR ACCEPT ME AS PRESIDENT. IF I AM TO BE PRESIDENT, I MUST HAVE THE PREROGATIVE TO GIVE THE ORDERS. IF I'M NOT THE PRESIDENT, I SHOULD LEAVE."

COL. FAROOK SAID THERE HAD BEEN ADVANCE HINTS OF A COUNTERCOUP BEFORE LAST MONDAY, BUT THE FIRST WORD OF

ACTION CAME WHEN A POLOCEMAN RAN INTO THE PALACE TO SAY
THATTWO COMPANIES OF INFANTRY WHICH HAD BEEN GUARDING
THE BUILDING "HAD PACKED UP AND LEFT."

AN ARMOURED CORPS MAJOR AND OTHER OFFICER--BOTH
OF WHOM WERE ARRESTED AND LATER RELEASED DURING NEGOTIATIONS--
TRIED TO SUBVERT TROOPS OF TANK UNITS STATIONED IN THE
DACCA CANTONMENT (MILITARY AREA) ABOUT SIX MILES (NINE
KMS) FROM THE PALACE, HE SAID.

THREE INFANTRY BATTALIONS THEN MOVED FROM THE CANTON-
MENT INTO THE CITY, BLOCKED ALL ENTRANCES TO THE CAN-
TONMENT AND SEIZED DACCA AIR BASE AND THE AIRPORT.

BY THIS TIME--TWO HOURS AFTER THE COUNTER COUP
STARTED--TWO COMPANIES OF TROOPS HAD ARRIVED TO GUARD
THE PALACE.

IN CONTACTS BY TELEPHONE, THE COUNTER-COUP LEADERS
DEMANDED THAT TANKS STATIONED AT THE PALACE AND DACCA RACE-
COURSE SHOULD OFFLOAD THEIR AMMUNITION AND BE SENT BACK
TO GARAGES IN THE CANTONMENT.
WHITEHOUSE

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TO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3818

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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THE PRESIDENT TURNED DOWN THE DEMAND AND SAID HE WOULD
NEGOTIATE, "BUT NOT AT GUNPOINT," COL FAROOK SAID.

COL FAROOK SAID HE ASKED THE PRESIDENT'S PERMISSION
TO COUNTER-ATTACK, BUT HE REFUSED.

"THERE WILL BE NO FIGHTING," HE QUOTED THE PRESIDENT

AS SAYING "IF THEY WANT TO RUN THE COUNTRY SO MUCH, THEY ARE WELCOME TO RUN THE COUNTRY, BUT THERE MUST BE NO BLOODSHED."

AROUND 5:30 A.M. A HELICOPTER ARMED WITH ROCKETS MADE "THREATENING PASSES" OVER THE TANKS STATIONED AT THE RACECOURSE, CLO FAROOK SAID.

HALF AN HOUR LATER, A MIG-21 ARMED WITH MISSILES MADE "MOCK STRAFING RUNS" OVER THE TANKS AT SUPERSONIC SPEED.

THE TANKS, EQUIPPED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES, WERE ORDERED NOT TO OPEN FIRE.

CONTACTS CONTINUED BETWEEN THE RIVAL FACTIONS, WITH SITUATION AT STALEMATE, UNTIL THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, COL FAROOK SAID.

"APPARENTLY, PRESIDENT MUSTAQUE AHMED TOLD THE COUNTERCOUP LEADERS IF YOU WANT TO RUN THE COUNTRY SO MUCH, LET ME AND THESE OFFICERS LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

THEY REFUSED TO LET HIM GO, BUT SAID THEY WOULD ALLOW THE OFFICERS TO LEAVE, COL FAROOK SAID.
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COL FAROOK SAID THAT AFTER THE AUGUST 15 COUP, HE AND OTHER OFFICERS BEHIND IT RELINQUISHED THEIR COMMANDS IMMEDIATELY AND BECAME AIDES OF THE PRESIDENT.

"WE ACTED MAINLY AS HIS EYES AND EARS. IF HE'D GIVEN A BIT MORE NOTICE TO IT , HE WOULD NOT BE IN THIS TROUBLE," HE ADDED.

HE SAID HE HIMSELF HAD DRAWN UP THE TACTICAL PLAN FOR THE COUP. PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE KNEW ROUGHLY WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT NOT THE PLAN.

HE SAID HE REGRETTED "THE UNNECESSARY KILLINGS" DURING THE COUP. BUT ASKED WHETHER HE REGRETTED THE KILLING OF MUJIB, HE SAID, "NO-- NOT HIM... THEY (THE LATE PRESIDENT AND A FEW PEOPLE EVERY CLOSE TO HIM) HAD TO GO.

"BUT WE HAD NO INTENTION OF KILLING ANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS." END QTE
WHITEHOUSE

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